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III

THE MADRAS VILLAGE OFFICERS RESTORATION BILL.

* The hon. Mr. N. E. MARJORIBANKS :—“ Mr. President, Sir, I beg to introduce the Madras Village Officers Restoration Bill and to move that it be read in Council.
2-45 p m.

“ The Bill is a very simple measure in its object. In the wording employed to attain that object special care has to be exercised lest it should entail consequences which were not intended. The object is mainly that in cases where it is proposed to revive the village offices that have been abolished recently in pursuance of the policy of amalgamation we should have power to appoint the former incumbents thereto. Under the present law, if we divide a village that has been amalgamated, the village officers who have to be appointed to the new village must be persons of the family of the present holders, and it would not be possible to re-appoint those who held the office before the amalgamation. It is to enable the appointment of those whose services were dispensed with at the amalgamation that this Bill is brought forward. So far, I do not think there would be any great objection to the measure.

“ In the wording of the Bill as drafted, one or two defects have been pointed out to the Government since it was published. These defects may be removed during the examination in the Select Committee, if the Bill is allowed to proceed so far. But I will refer to two defects to avoid possible misapprehension. The first is this: it appeared to some people on examining the Bill as published that there was some intention on the part of the Government to give discretion as to whether in cases where the villages were redivided the old officers should be restored or not. That was not the intention. The intention was that the old officers should resume office if the villages were redivided.

“ The other point is that the wording of sections 4 and 5 of the Bill is such as to give rise to the idea that it is intended to give a title to those who held offices as gumastas before the amalgamation. There was no such intention on the part of the Government. If the draft conveys such an idea, that is a mistake which should be rectified in the Select Committee. So much for the Bill.

“ But the House will be probably more interested and want to know more particularly what the extent is to which Government propose to redivide the amalgamated villages and to restore the old officers, and perhaps even more than that, the salaries which the Government propose that they should get in future. On those points, subject to two conditions which I shall shortly mention, the Government have not come to a final conclusion. They would like, before doing so, to hear the views of hon. Members in this House who are interested in the matter. The two conditions which the Government have decided on are, first, that the total cost should not exceed the amount which is provided for in the current year's budget. The cost of the village establishments was raised by reason of the revision of the salaries and, notwithstanding the savings effected by the amalgamation, it increased from Rs. 72 lakhs to Rs. 119 lakhs a year, which is approximately the present figure. The Government feel that they cannot go beyond that and spend anything more on these establishments than this Rs. 119 lakhs. The other condition is that the extent of the redividing must depend upon the administrative need for it. The Government do not propose to restore villages which are so small that a separate village establishment is really not justified, or to reconstitute village

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establishments in deserted villages. Subject to those two conditions, the Government, as I have already said, have not finally decided what lines the re-division and restoration should proceed upon. But as a basis of discussion I would mention certain provisional conclusions or provisional lines of revision which might interest hon. Members.

"In regard to the restoration of officers, taking first the case of ryotwari tracts there are two separate areas to be considered, first, those in which the regrouping was carried out and, secondly, those where it was stopped. After regrouping had proceeded to a certain extent and had practically been completed in ryotwari tracts nearly all over the Presidency, after a debate in this Council the process of reorganization was stopped. When we consider what we are to do in the way of re-dividing the villages, we have to consider these two areas separately. Because it would seem only fair that we should proceed on the same principles in both; that is, in villages where there has been no regrouping, regrouping should be done to the extent to which we propose that it should continue in the area in which it has been completely carried out.

"The same principle is applicable to the proprietary areas, the only difference there being that the regrouping was not carried out to anything like the same extent in the proprietary areas as it was in the ryotwari areas.

"Then, as to the question of pay; taking talaiyaris first, the suggestion put forward is that the rate of pay for the talaiyaris should remain as it now is in ryotwari areas. The reason is that in the case of the talaiyari his pay may reasonably be taken to represent much the greater part of his cost of living than in the case of the other two officers. In the case of the karnam, also, in ryotwari areas, it is provisionally not proposed to alter the rate of Rs. 15, which is the present rate. The ground for that is that the karnam is, much more than the headman, a full-time official. Although it may be contended that his whole time is not bound up with Government work, yet it is so to a much larger extent than in the case of the headman. If these propositions were conceded, it would follow that the pay of the headman would then have to be fixed at the figure that would make the total cost of the whole establishment not exceed the present cost. If all offices were to be restored and no offices were to be abolished in areas where no abolition has taken place hitherto, the rate for the headman on an arithmetical computation would work out to Rs. 7 per mensem. But as some offices would not be revived in the areas where regrouping has already taken place, and as some offices would be found unnecessary in places where no regrouping has taken place, it is hoped, although we have not worked out detailed figures, that we will be able to fix the headman's pay at Rs. 10 per mensem.

"In zamindari tracts, the proposal for consideration is that the present rate of pay for menials, which is Rs. 6, should be retained and that the rates of pay for the karnams should be reduced by one rupee in each grade. In zamindari areas we have them in different grades of pay, and propose to reduce the pay by one rupee in each grade, and to work out the rates for the headmen so that the total cost of the staff should not exceed the budget grant. In this case, it is more difficult to estimate the figure that would result therefrom. Because in the estate areas there are graded rates of pay. It is not uniform as in the case of ryotwari tracts. As a preliminary calculation, as far as we can foresee, the figures will work out a little more than the following:—4,438 (at Rs. 5), 1,224 (Rs. 6), 332 (Rs. 7), 87 (Rs. 8), 76 (Rs. 9), 33 (Rs. 10) and 40 (Rs. 12).

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"There are a few cases in ryotwari areas where karnams and munsifs get a higher rate. It is not proposed to touch those. They were fixed for special reasons.

"Now, in considering these proposals and in criticising them, I would ask hon. Members to bear in mind the interests of the villages as being the predominant factor in the matter. The general feeling of the Government is that it is necessary to have as village headmen men of substance and influence in the villages and not petty officials to whom a few rupees of pay is a great consideration, and I venture to think that it will be conceded that the villagers themselves would probably prefer that the headman should be a man of some substance and influence rather than a petty official who would seek office for the sake of Rs. 15 per mensem."

The hon. Sir C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR :—"I second it."

* Mr. T. ADINARAYANA CHETTIYAR :—"Sir, I wish to have some information. May I know what is the criterion on which the villages are to be re-divided or officers restored, whether it is by the *beris* or the area or what?"

* The hon. Mr. N. E. MARJORIBANKS :—"As to that, my idea is to lay down, in consultation with the Revenue authorities, a standard below which we would not think it necessary to re-divide a village and then to order re-division in cases which are above that standard. We shall have to fix a standard and then to have it applied by the lower authorities. But the standard of course would have to take into consideration not only the *beris* but also the population, probably also whether the land is dry or wet, and the number of survey fields. This problem is quite familiar to the administration and I think we should be able to devise a satisfactory standard."

* Mr. T. ADINARAYANA CHETTIYAR :—"Mr. President, Sir, this Bill is a long-expected one. There is no doubt about that. The question now is whether the House will accept the present Bill and whether the Bill satisfies the requirements of the resolution of the 9th February 1924. I am afraid the Bill does not go far to meet the requirements of practically the unanimous resolution of this House.

"In the first place, those three words 'in certain cases' found in the preamble as well as in the body of the Bill have filled the minds of a large number of village officers with consternation. Sir, another matter, viz., the discretion allowed under the Bill, as it is, to District Collectors is also felt to be a disquieting factor. It is not expected that the Collectors, with their numerous other avocations, can find time or opportunity to know and be acquainted with the work of these small people called village officers. Whether it is intended or not, village officers will be put to great hardship by this discretion being given to the Collectors. As we know things are done in this country, some correspondence clerk or some small official puts up notes and they will be approved. At any rate, it is not possible to forget that when the regrouping operation was going on some time back—I do not want to enter into details—large sums were transferred from hand to hand, and many people suffered. It is a notorious fact. Not much is gained by referring to this fact in greater detail. Therefore, Sir, if any discretion is allowed in this matter, it may be that some subordinates may get enriched out of the sufferings of these poor village officers. The discretion allowed under the Bill may also lead to another act of injustice like this. In the last grouping of villages some clever village officers got themselves retained in positions by ousting their rivals; it may be that the charges of the former officers were less important

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than those of their rivals. The men with heavier charges were dispossessed. Unless the grouping which took place is quashed automatically and village officers are restored, injustice will be done to men with heavier charges as they will lose their places in favour of men with lighter charges. The village officers are much afraid of such a contingency. They have held so many conferences between February 1924 and now and have expressed the fear that unless the Bill is so framed as to restore the state of affairs as existed before the grouping took place, it is likely that they will be victims to another set of people. This fear is felt by all classes of people. The old Act gave them power to appeal to the Board of Revenue. Although an appeal to the Board of Revenue is not a very attractive proposition to many people in this country, still the Board of Revenue does some justice occasionally to some people. This chance of getting some justice is being taken away in many cases.

"Sir, about the pay of village officers, the hon. the Mover of the Bill hinted that it would be Rs. 10 or so; it will not be acceptable to many. It is not very long ago there was a proposal in this House to increase the pay of the village officers from Rs. 15 to something very much more than that. Although that proposal was not carried in this House, yet the voting division on that occasion clearly shows that a large number of hon. Members in this House are in favour of increasing and not reducing the pay. Moreover, Sir, when money has been found for highly paid officers who have been characterised as the steel frame, money ought to be found for the steel frame of administration in the rural parts; we know what a large number of supplementary grants were moved during the last few days; all sources of generosity seem to be dried up in the case of village officers whose duties are varied and important. Their duty does not consist in the collection of kist only. They are magistrates and look after various kinds of duties. They are all powerful in the village. They look after their multifarious duties for a pittance of Rs. 15. Of course, the hon. Mover of the Bill has spoken highly of them. Many of them are very poor. I know what amount of supplies they have to find when highly paid officers visit their villages; they are afraid of the nightmare of the jamabandi. The pay of Rs. 15 given to them is too low. I hope the hon. Mover of the Bill will be pleased to see that the words 'in certain cases' are removed. The village officers will be highly pleased if the hon. Member will give an assurance that their pay will not be reduced."

* Mr. R. SRINIVASA AYYANGAR:—"At this stage, I think I can give only a qualified support to this Bill. I do not think that we need oppose it. I should like to focus the attention of the House on three or four features of the Bill. The House may perhaps remember that three or four years ago it recommended to the Government by an almost unanimous resolution to fix the pay of the village headman at Rs. 15 or more. With a view to respect the feelings of this House and with a view to satisfy the agitation that was kept going on throughout the Presidency, the Government felt themselves bound to increase the pay of the village headmen and fixed it at Rs. 15. But when the question of finance came up, the Government felt the difficulty. They had to make both ends meet and also to give effect to the resolution of this House. The Government therefore through the Board of Revenue embarked upon a scheme of grouping the villages. The Members of the House will be struck with the fact that, as a result of the regrouping or amalgamation, as many as 16,584 men have been thrown out of employment, and left practically destitute to earn their livelihood. Out of this number of people, 11,500 men come of the depressed classes and they were all village

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menials. On going through the Bill, I find that it is somewhat carefully and guardedly worded. The preamble says 'whereas it is expedient *in certain cases*', not in all cases as should be expected, but only in certain cases. I should like to know what proportion these *certain cases* are likely to bear to the total number of villages affected by this regrouping. If this proportion is fairly large, if it comes to 90 or 95 per cent, I have absolutely no quarrel with that. The hon. the Revenue Member stated that very small villages, villages having small beriz, small area, or a small number of people, could not have any grievance. But as a matter of fact we know that the regrouping has done a lot of mischief. It appears to have gone on to the greatest inconvenience of the village officers concerned, with the result that nobody seems to be satisfied. I hope the hon. the Revenue Member will view this question sympathetically without allowing himself to be influenced by the bogey of finance. I hope he will see his way to restore automatically as much as possible the whole body of persons who have been thrown out of employment. A great deal of the remarks turned upon the pay that will necessarily have to be paid to the village headmen. The hon. the Revenue Member stated that the office of the village headman which is hereditary in some districts carried with it a certain amount of prestige and that there was no necessity to give him higher pay. I would like to tell him how this Bill has been received by the public. After the publication of this Bill I had a talk with some village officers. A very small number of them not exceeding half a dozen said that they would be willing to be honorary workers for nothing. They do not care for the pay that is attached to the post. About 20 or 30 village officers insisted upon their present pay of Rs. 15 being given. A fairly good number of them expressed to me that they would be gratified if their pay was fixed at Rs. 12. But at the same time I must mention that some village headmen with whom I had consultation pointed out to me in very telling and forcible terms, from which I found no way to escape, the unwisdom of the Government in reducing the pay of these men while as a matter of fact officers and clerks in other departments have had the benefit of incremental time-scales. I found it difficult to resist that argument. They pointed out to me that side by side with the reduction in their pay the prospects of other men working in other departments have increased; they argued with me very strenuously and asked me whether it was fair, just, equitable and reasonable that while a large number of persons have incremental rates of pay they should be paid only Rs. 10 or Rs. 12.

3-15 p.m. "That is an argument which, I think, is sure to carry conviction to any one's mind. I am not altogether without hope and I should like to emphasise this aspect of the case that it is desirable and politic on the part of the Government not to interfere with the pay, for it will be setting up a bad precedent of once starting a man on a higher pay and then asking him to be content with a lower pay. Are the Government prepared to pursue this policy in other departments under their control? I do not think the Government can be well justified in coming before the public and asking these poor village officers, especially the village headmen, to be satisfied with less pay.

"As regards clause 3, I should like to make one observation. It says: 'The Collector shall, notwithstanding anything contained in the First Act or the Second Act, have power to, etc.' It is one thing to vest the power in the Collector and another thing to compel him to exercise that power. Therefore I suggest the omission of the words 'have power to'.

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"Turning to section 4, I find 'subject to the control of the District Collector an order passed under section 3 of this Act shall be final.' What is the kind of control contemplated here? Is it by way of appeal? But no right of appeal has been given. I think it is better, instead of putting it in this vague, indefinite and nebulous way, that some definiteness is given and the matter set at rest.

"With these few remarks, I shall conclude by saying that the Government must extend its hand of fellowship to a much larger extent and be prepared even to meet some extra expenditure with a view to give solace and satisfaction to the large number of officers, who unfortunately, for no fault of their own, were suddenly thrown out of employment."

Mr. A. RAMASWAMI MUDALIYAR :—"Mr. President, Sir, I must at first express on behalf of the party to which I belong our gratification that the Government have been pleased to bring forward this Bill in consonance with resolution of this House passed unanimously some time in the beginning of last year. The question of re-appointing those who have been deprived of the office of village headman which they had held for generations was a question which was seriously fought out in this Council, and there was a great deal of feeling evinced by all sides of the House that these officers should be re-appointed. I was a member of the deputation that waited on the previous Governor of the Presidency and a reply was then given by the Governor that the question would be considered sympathetically. I am glad that in pursuance of that the hon. the Revenue Member has brought forward this Bill.

"We sitting on this side of the House are always keen to show our appreciation of any act of the Government which is calculated to meet public opinion and public demand. (Voices of 'hear, hear' from the Opposition side.) In the same generous spirit, the Government have come forward with this Bill. But there are one or two points in connexion with the Bill itself which have already been touched upon; there are one or two defects which have to be remedied in the select committee. A perusal of the Bill places me under the misapprehension that there has been loose drafting in connexion with the Bill, a little more of loose drafting than we are accustomed to in the Bills of the Local Government of Madras. Apart from the loose drafting, there have been two points raised by some of the hon. Members opposite which I think I should advert to. But the greatest objection has been taken to the expression 'in certain cases' which appears both in the preamble and in the statement of objects and reasons. Those of us who had anything to do with this question when the grouping of villages was going on, those of us who had the unfortunate privilege of hearing the grievances of those village headmen who have been deprived of their offices and the manner in which this regrouping was done, and the personnel which eventually came to be at the head of the grouping of villages, those of us who knew the danger in some districts among some officials with reference to this question, were apprehensive of the discretion to be shown in connexion with the re-division. But I am glad to be assured by the hon. the Revenue Member that there is no question of discretion being allowed to any section of officers in this matter, and that those villages which have been grouped will be re-divided now. I want to suggest a formal and simple formula for his consideration. Wherever you have proceeded with the grouping of villages in pursuance of the

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policy of retrenchment, wherever you have joined one village to another, because at one time your finances were so low that you wanted to have a saving out of this scheme, you are bound to go back because now you have to give up this idea of retrenchment, you are bound to re-divide all such villages which have been grouped in pursuance of that policy. But if apart from the policy of retrenchment, apart from this scheme by which the finances of the Presidency may be balanced by some little saving, you may come to the conclusion that villages by themselves ought to be amalgamated because they had dwindled out of their previous importance or they were so small that it was unnecessary to have a village headman for these villages, in such cases probably, the older theory may stand. But in every district where this has been done in pursuance of that policy—and we all know that that policy came into existence on a certain date—when the Board's Standing Order that was issued had to be superseded by another standing order in pursuance of a resolution of this Council, I suggest that every amalgamation which took place in the intervening period ought to be set aside automatically. There is no reason why you should make a distinction in such cases at all, and it is a distinction which will certainly not reflect credit on some of the subordinate officers of Government if it is persisted in.

“ Then, Sir, apart from the measure itself, the hon. the Revenue Member placed some very serious proposals for our consideration and invited the opinion of the House on those proposals. It would perhaps have been better, if at a later stage when there was a fuller House and we had more opportunity for discussing those proposals, they were placed before the House. Perhaps, the House will take another opportunity to give its definite and decided opinion on this matter. But inasmuch as the proposals have been placed before the House, I think it is fair to the hon. the Revenue Member and fair to ourselves that we should give our attention to them. The question of the reduction of salary of village headmen has been prominently mentioned by the hon. the Revenue Member and my Friend from North Arcot has given his opinion on the matter. Now, Sir, we are in this unfortunate position that any proposal for reducing the salary of any set of officials is bound to be unpopular and is bound to be resisted by that set of officials. And we have also our duty to perform with respect to the masses. I want to invite the hon. the Revenue Member's attention pointedly to this fact. In the first reformed Legislative Council, a salaries committee was appointed to go into the question of pay of these officers. One of the main recommendations of that salaries committee in reference to the village officers was that the whole basis of their pay should be examined, and the question should be seriously considered by the Revenue Department whether the village headman, apart from other menials and the village karnams, should not be treated as a class apart and therefore the question of their pay should not be given a different aspect altogether. If I were to make myself plain, I believe the salaries committee definitely recommended that the question of treating the amount given to headmen as honorarium should be seriously considered by the Government and the Government should also take into consideration the question of their official status or prestige. The hon. the Revenue Member quite correctly stated in his introductory remarks on the Bill that he expected the village headmen to be men of status and position and therefore men who do not depend on their salary. I want to suggest to him why give this salary at all? The moment you call it salary or pay, that moment you give the man a status, and you obviously make a comparison

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between him and the karnam. The karnam gets Rs. 15, the headman Rs. 12 or Rs. 15. Naturally, the distinction is invidious as against the village headman. If you call it an honorarium, it is quite different. After all, to quote one of Shakespeare's maxims:

'What is in a name? that which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet.'

"There is a world of difference between salary and honorarium; for if once you call it an honorarium, then much of the criticism that could be levelled justifiably at the smallness of pay will lose its force.

"Then, Sir, I am again adverting to the report of the salaries committee. I believe we stated then that the question of the status and dignity of the village headman should be seriously considered. I am aware of a recent Government Order issued three years ago, in which this was to a certain extent adverted to. But I feel there has not been enough attention paid to the Government Order by the officers of the Government all over the Presidency to this day; and only this morning I was hearing a complaint that the village headmen were treated as if they were menials. The tahsildar or the revenue inspector asks the village headman to appear before him forthwith; a chit goes to him in a most informal way—probably written by pencil on a scrap of paper the cleanliness of which the less said the better—asking the village headman to supply this or that information within 24 hours, and if not, serious notice will be taken. Does the hon. the Revenue Member expect any man of status to put up with this condition? If he wants him to work like that, he cannot possibly expect a man of status for that post. There are two important points which the hon. the Revenue Member should bear in mind if he were to have a contented staff of village headmen. First call their pay an honorarium, and let them clearly understand—the officers of his department in particular—that these headmen are gentlemen and not the menial servants of every tahsildar or revenue inspector, and let the men themselves realize that they have been given a social status and recognized as respectable men. In the second place, let a Government Order be issued or orders enforced that, as far as possible, these men will be given their proper status. I am aware that administrative difficulties there are and there will be and that red-tapism demands that somehow or other work has to be done and that work is not done if there is not a certain amount of legal or illegal coercion.

"But, Sir, after all is said and done—the tradition may be a little difficult to be altered—I am bound to say that without this legal coercion that now exists, without these rough and ready methods, the work will get on, perhaps a little more satisfactorily than it does at present; the reports will come then perhaps a little more regularly, perhaps a little more accurately. Just now the tendency is to hurry them up, if you give them only 24 hours you will get only some sort of report but if you treat them as gentlemen and expect them to do their work properly, then you will get much better information and much more accurate reports from these village headmen. But unless you give them that status, that position, and unless you recognize them as really independent men, unless you do that, I do not think the position that has been taken by the hon. the Revenue Member will be felt to be satisfactory by the village headmen.

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"One word more. I am talking now of the headmen concerned whose hereditary right I am anxious to preserve. Because, in the days when I was young I certainly felt that the village headman was a power in the land. I was raised, if I may use an Americanism, in the Ceded districts and I still have very vivid recollection of the status, dignity and power in those days more than 30 or 35 years ago, attached to the position of a village headman. Right in the Kurnool district were men certainly of power, a great deal of influence and certainly most respected men so far as officialdom was concerned. Tahsildars, huzur sarishtadars and divisional officers even considered it a privilege to have their friendship and to some extent claimed that privilege. But owing to the economic considerations and owing to the power of those who are at the helm of affairs in the centre of Government and also owing to several considerations of that kind, a great deal of that power and influence gradually disappeared under the bureaucratic system of Government. I want that to be revived, if possible. Possibly it is a most forlorn wish, but still something must be done for it.

3-30 p.m. "Now, Sir, if you take up the position that you must have an adequate salary and that you must be paid for your work, then you are bound to lose what little of dignity remains in you. If you want a living wage, if you say that a labourer is worthy of his hire, then nobody could testify to the hereditary character of your service or your claim to be treated as a gentleman. That is the thing I want to say plainly if you are going to suggest that Rs. 20 or Rs. 35 should be paid to you. Anybody who knows the modern economic conditions would realize that it is not a question of Rs. 20 or Rs. 25. Much more is deserved by these men, but I may say how at the same time can you reconcile it with your hereditary claim for the appointment? That is why most of those who sat with me found themselves unable to support the proposition for the enhancement of their salary. We felt, and we leave it to the headmen themselves to judge whether we were right or not, that the hereditary principle was much more important than the question of salary and therefore we said with one voice that the office should be a hereditary office and that this question of salary should be solved in quite a different way. Therefore I want to warn the village headmen that if they take up the position to-day that they must have their salary adequate to the work they do, then the agitation is bound to come from my hon. Friend Mr. Veerian, from other hon. Members and from the Government themselves that the principle of heredity in regard to the holding of offices is a principle of the last century and that it should be done away with. If, on the other hand, you realize your position and make the Government realize that you are there as really a headman of the village, as a man of status, as a man of position, as a member of a family which for generations has occupied this supremely eminent position in the village hierarchy, then I say, you should not care for this pittance of salary. You should prefer the honorarium which would give you that position and that status which for instance the taluk board president or any other honorary officer to-day claims. Till you do that, till you restore the dignity of the village headman, you cannot build up that village system in the country which was there in days past and which men of all persuasions in certain presidencies in particular seek to revive. We seek to revive the same village entity, the same village corporation in a different way. Perhaps we do not go about advertising to the same extent, but every one of us who have the real interest of the country at heart do realize that village restoration is the main thing. Therefore it is that village restoration,

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to restore the village headman to his proper place, not as a paid servant of the Government at the beck and call of every Tom, Dick and Harry but as a really substantial man and a man of position that we are aiming at."

* Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR:—"I am sorry that the hon. the Revenue Member is somewhat halting in his attempt to restore the original state of affairs in its entirety. If he wants to amalgamate a few villages here and there, I think that question must be tackled separately. Even with regard to the other class of cases where he thinks it obligatory that the new villages should be split up into their old component parts, I doubt whether the phraseology adopted in this draft Bill would accomplish the object he has in view. Section 3 says:

'Where new villages formed by the grouping or amalgamation of villages are re-divided into the old component villages, or offices which have been reduced are revived, the following consequences will ensue.'

"Sir, the process by which the old offices are attempted to be revived is one of re-division. Now, I submit that it is not possible in very many cases by a resort to this simple process of re-division to bring about the old villages back into activity. Because the villages are defined as either a single village or a group of villages. Now, at the last revision, villages have been grouped to suit certain administrative conveniences. For example let us take village A, village B and village C. Now, village C may not be a single village but may consist of two or three villages, say C 1, C 2 and C 3. Now, Sir, at the time of the last revision they have formed these three villages into two groups and in doing so they have split up village C and taken a hamlet for one village and another hamlet for another village. Now, if they resort only to the simple process of re-division they cannot by any method bring about the old village entity back again. So that not only this process of re-division has to be resorted to, but also the process of regrouping. It is only then, I think, Sir, that we can achieve what we have in view.

"Again, section 3, clause (b), of the Bill refers to the age of 21 years. That, I think, again is a hardship in the case of such of those people who were 20 or 21 at the time of the last revision, but were not qualified to hold the office at the time of the last revision when their offices were taken away from them. They thought they had no chance of reinstatement to these offices and so did not care to qualify themselves for these appointments. Now, this Act comes into force and we are to take into account merely the fact whether they are or are not 21 years old now and whether they are qualified or not. I think the age-limit must be increased by five years, i.e., the interval which has passed since the last revision and the date when this Act may come into force.

"As regards section 4, the control by the district collector must be defined a little more clearly. What is that control to be? Are you going to allow regular appeal or is the power confined to the ordinary powers of revision conferred by Regulation VII of 1828.

"Most important of all is clause 5 where power is given to the appointing officer to appoint a particular man or not at his discretion. If a man is dead there is no question at all. But this section gives an officer power to appoint some one else in the place of a particular man whom for any reason he may consider to be not available. This will give a large scope for unscrupulous people to do wrong to the people concerned. We know what happened in the last revision. I am very sorry to confess it. People really rallied round the appointing officer scrambling for these offices. I wish very earnestly that

[Mr. A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar] [27th August 1925]

the Government delete this clause from this Bill. Their object must be to restore the old offices and the old officers without exception and if any one of them is incompetent you can frame charges and deal with him subsequently. But you must not give any powers to pass them by, at the very outset.

“Again, Sir, there are two or three kinds of offices. There is the registered office holder who may not be in office; the registered office holder who also holds office and the third man who may be a deputy. Now, I doubt very much whether the Government include all these cases in section 5. Surely they do not say that if the office was held last time by a deputy and it has stood in his name, his son must necessarily succeed to his appointment.

“Then there is clause 6 which refers to the right of succession. I do not know if this Bill takes away the right to sue in a civil court. Suppose there is a suit against a man which was time-barred before the last revision, would his re-appointment now give rise to a fresh cause of action or not? That is a point, I think which we have to consider and give an opinion upon. These are some of the points which occur to me on a perusal of the Bill.”

Mr. P. ANJANEYULU :—“Mr. President, Sir, when first this Bill was placed in our hands we thought there would not be so much controversy as we were convinced since that there should be owing to some of the reasons underlying the preparation of this Bill being revealed to us in this Hall this evening. It was more the explanation that raised greater and more serious issues than the provisions or the wording of the Bill itself. As soon as the Bill came into our hands we thought that the whole attempt was to reinstate the village officers who in pursuance of a resolution of this hon. House were thrown out of office on account of a friendly act of many of the hon. Members of this very House, viz., that their pay and prospects should be increased. For, if we go to the genesis of this matter we can see that it was because we wanted that the pay and prospects of these men should be increased that there came about a decrease in their number and also the clubbing of the villages. So, when we understood that this Bill is to be introduced we were only under the impression that the clubbing will be set at naught and regrouping will be effected. In other words, we thought that the villages as they stood before the clubbing would be restored to their original position and that the village officers who were thrown out by clubbing would automatically be restored. But now the other question has arisen, viz., that the pay and prospects of the village headmen, and the pay and prospects of the karnams (and assistant karnams also I suppose) should be considered. As far as the village headman is concerned, Sir, the question has been mooted whether he should have the hereditary right to office. My hon. Friend from Chingleput has been saying that the village headmen should be given only a small salary called honorarium, that many of the village headmen would be forthcoming to work almost as honorary workers because it is not so much the little money that is given to them which is only an inducement for them to work as village headmen as the position of the village headmen and the long cherished hope of their having ruled the units which formed the foundation of the administration, that counts. It is that sentiment to which they are clinging and not so much the remuneration that is offered to them. Therefore if that sentiment is respected and if instead of calling it a salary you call it an honorarium as suggested by my hon. Friend there will not be much difficulty so far as finance under this item is concerned.

27th August 1925]

[Mr. P. Anjaneyulu]

"As regards the other question of the hereditary right to office, I should very much like to press on the attention of the hon. Members that it is not because a man has suddenly become rich, on account of his success at the horse races one fine morning, his status in life improves but because for a long number of years, for a generation, and perhaps even from the time of our ancient kings they were headmen, their sons have been headmen; and therefore they pray that their posterity should be headmen. That is why they cling to this office. There are other things also to be considered in this small section and this could be done in the Select Committee. I hope therefore that the hon. Member in charge will kindly take these into consideration and give them that amount of attention which they deserve."

Mr. CHAVADI K. SUBRAHMANYA PILLAI :—"Mr. President, Sir, the offices
3-45 p.m. of village headmen were originally confirmed by Statute and they were held by the influential and rich mirasdars of the village on a poor pay of Rs. 2½ to Rs. 7. It was an honorarium. The duties for which they are made responsible are too many, and in fact they are the roots of the administration. The village headman has to respond to all officers in the various departments of Government, and he being the local officer, his information is to be relied on as trustworthy. The revenue and magisterial functions were combined in him with the view that he might command much influence and respect in the villages. It was with this object and reason that each village was made a unit for the post of village headman. If, in consideration of the onerous duties which the village headmen have to perform and if, in conformity with the enhanced rates of pay sanctioned to the various Government officers and the rise of prices Government thought it necessary to give them also, in equity, increased rates of pay, it has erred in grouping two or more offices into one. The result is that one man in addition to his multifarious duties has to attend to the general administration of more villages than one and the efficiency is greatly impaired. In the interests of justice and fairness, the Government should be grateful to the families who have worked for the cause of Government for two or three generations on a very poor pay of Rs. 2½ to Rs. 7 from time to time. At a time when they were anxiously awaiting a larger pay for the very valuable services rendered by themselves and their ancestors, they were deprived of their posts to their great disappointment. They were made an object of ridicule by their villagers for this treatment. The men who were thrown out of their offices do not at all deserve such harsh and unsympathetic treatment at the hands of Government and it is absolutely necessary that they should be remunerated properly for their long and meritorious services. I would therefore request the hon. Member in charge that the original units of offices be restored immediately without any further delay."

Mr. B. Venkataratnam spoke in Telugu.

* Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—"Sir, just a few words. So far as the question of the number of villages which are to be divided is concerned, I think it is better that the matter, either legitimately or otherwise, whether it comes under this Bill or not, should be placed before the members of the Select Committee, so that the principles on which this re-division must take place may be settled and subordinates in the whole Presidency, from the Collector downwards, may have nothing to do but to see that all those principles are put into practice. Another point that has not been referred to by any hon. Friend is this: This Bill says that the Act shall have force in districts

[24th August 1925]

Mr. R. VEERIAN :—“ In answer to clause (a) we find that ‘ G.O. No. 37, Public, dated the 9th January 1925, has not been withdrawn.’ Sir, we find that this Government Order states ‘ the Government have no power of interference unless the agraphams are connected with business centres. The members of the depressed classes have no free access to the post offices located in agraphams.’ Well, Sir, though the agraphams are connected with business centres or with a post office and if the members of the depressed classes wish to have free access to the post office with a view to transact postal business, they are actually prevented from entering the agraphams. I want to know the reasons why they are prevented.”

The hon. Sir C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR :—“ I was not aware of this until the hon. Member made himself responsible for the statement that members of the depressed classes are prevented from going to the post office. I was under the impression that a post office was a place of business so that the Government Order quoted by the hon. Member would technically apply to cases which he has been complaining of. If the hon. Member would make himself responsible for a contrary statement and specify the cases where such interference took place, the Government would inquire into the matter.”

Mr. R. VEERIAN :—“ May I point out that very recently in a village called Kethandapatti near Jolarpet, the members of the depressed classes were prevented from going to the post office through the agrapham ? ”

Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARIU (from the chair) :—“ The instance which you refer to does not apply to the question set down on the agenda paper.”

Mr. R. VEERIAN :—“ As the hon. the Law Member asked me to specify the case where such interference was caused, I pointed out that instance.”

The hon. Sir C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR :—“ If the hon. Member writes to me how the members of the depressed classes were interfered with or invite my attention to anything that has happened, I shall cause inquiries to be made.”

Mr. R. VEERIAN :—“ Thank you, Sir.”

Irrigation.

Alleged cancellation of water-supply for inam dry lands by the Collector of Madura.

* 331 Q.—Mr. A. CHIDAMBARA NADAR: Will the hon. the Law Member and the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(a) whether it is a fact that the Collector of Madura has issued a notification in the *Madura District Gazette Extraordinary*, dated 13th February 1924, cancelling the permanent supply of water for inam dry lands from the close of fasli 1333;

(b) if so, the reason for the same; and

(c) whether it is a fact that the Collector insists on every person irrigating or possessing landed interest in a certain land to obtain fresh permission in his name on pain of penalty in spite of the fact that the land was already given permanent supply and was included under a well-defined ayacut or a sluice in the channel?

27th August 1925] [Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar]

be called a fool. Anyhow, the Government seem to have come to the conclusion that whatever the number of these village headmen may be, the grant shall never exceed the present amount Rs. 119 lakhs. I would say that this is very unjust in the interests of these village officers, on whose contentment and loyalty the whole administration is based.

4 p.m. "Therefore, Sir, in the interests of Government themselves and also in the interests of these people I would appeal to the Government to see that these people get at least Rs. 15. The Government may, if necessary, bring a demand for a supplementary grant."

Khan Bahadur P. KHALIF-UL-LAH SAHIB:—"Sir, first of all I have to congratulate the hon. the Revenue Member for this honest attempt to put an end to the longstanding grievance which has been voiced forth on the floor of this House and outside. While welcoming this Bill I have to point out that it is not without its defects, and some of them very serious ones. First of all the Bill is not quite definite as to the person to whom it is going to give redress. So far as I am concerned, Sir, I must tell the hon. Member clearly that if this Bill does not give redress to each and every one of those who were thrown out as a result of the regrouping, we will not be satisfied.

"Then the next most important question is the one relating to the pay of these officers. So far as the village officers are concerned, my hon. Friend from Coimbatore has pointed out that their pay should not be reduced. I also appreciate the idea expressed by my hon. Friend from Chingleput who said that if instead of calling it 'pay' you called that an 'honorarium' much of the objections raised in this behalf would cease. I do quite see the point raised. But whether you call it 'pay' or whether you call it 'honorarium', I am sure the House will strongly object to any proposal to reduce the present scale of Rs. 15. It is a fact well known to every hon. Member of this House that the pay of the lowest menial in any establishment is not lower than Rs. 15.

"Again, Sir, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, the Bill is not quite definite as to the control of these Collectors. I strongly urge, Sir, that the right of finality should not be vested in the hands of the Collectors of the districts. I know of instances where the decisions of the Collector have been anything but satisfactory. I do not want to refer to particular cases but I urge that it is peremptorily necessary not to vest that right in the Collectors. There must be a provision for appeal to a higher authority than the Collector."

* Rao Bahadur A. S. KRISHNA RAO PANTULU:—"Sir, this question has a history behind it. Some time back a motion was carried in this House for the increase of pay of the village officers. During the debate some hon. Members suggested that Government might even take on hand the regrouping of the villages in order to give effect to the wishes of the House. Government took this up seriously, with the result that the villages were regrouped and so much discontent has been caused and now an attempt is made to restore the old order of things. So far as this Bill is concerned we all welcome it though it is not calculated to achieve the object that we all desire and though it is not calculated to restore to office all those persons who were affected by the grouping of the villages and the reduction of the number of the village officers. We hope that all these defects will be removed in the Select Committee.

[Mr. A. S. Krishna Rao Pantulu] [27th August 1925]

"The important issue now raised is the reduction of the pay of the village officers. As regards that, divergent opinions have been expressed in this House. The hon. the Revenue Member wanted to ascertain how the House would view the proposal to decrease the salaries of the village headmen to Rs. 12. In this connexion I would say that there is much force in the very interesting Telugu speech made by my hon. Friend Mr. Venkataratnam."

* Diwan Bahadur M. KRISHNAN NAYAR :—"Which some of us did not understand."

* Rao Bahadur A. S. KRISHNA RAO PANTULU :—"The hon. Member said that there was no justification for applying this principle, only in the case of the village officers. If this principle were applied even for the higher grades of officers I do not think that the village officers will have any reason to complain. When the higher grades of officers are given increased salaries and allowances without hesitation and without any reference to the increase or decrease in their number, the village officers have every reason to complain that they have not been treated properly. When it is recognized that these village officers discharge most responsible duties in the country, to apply in their case alone of all others in the world, the principle of reducing their salary in case their number is to be increased, is an unjustifiable differentiation which would be strongly objected to by this House. But we are now faced with two alternatives. Are we to bring back those village officers and reduce the scale of pay and thus give effect to the provisions of the Bill or are we to remain content with the *status quo*? The hon. Member for Chingleput said that so long as you call it 'pay' there would be discontent and dissatisfaction if you attempt to reduce it. When once we have increased the pay we must find it very difficult to go back. The Government must have anticipated when they increased the pay that such a resentment would have been caused by any attempt to reduce it and hesitated before increasing it. Having increased it, now to say that they would reduce it, is a thing which we would strongly protest against. We are placed in a difficult predicament. Sir, I feel that we must in practice be prepared to accept the suggestion of the hon. Member for Chingleput though not to the full extent. We must divide the village headmen into two classes. Even now there are some village headmen who do not care for their pay. But there are others whose only source of livelihood is their salary. We have to make a distinction between these two classes of persons. In former days the most influential persons and the richest persons in the villages were appointed as village headmen. When they found that they could not get better treatment from the officials above, they passed their posts to some clerk of theirs or to some other person and gradually even strangers came to occupy those posts. Most of these influential headmen spent probably more than what they got as their pay when the officials of the Government visited the villages. But we must take into account the other class of headmen whose sole income is their pay. I asked a few headmen whether they would accept reduced pay and they replied that they would rather have no pay at all than take a reduced pay."

"That was the reply given by those who could afford to have their pay reduced. Therefore I would suggest that, instead of embarking upon a policy of reducing their pay, the appointments may be made honorary. I believe that inquiries have been made before and there were several village officers who did not much care for the pay of Rs. 12, but who were quite prepared to accept it as an honorarium. But I hope the

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[Mr. N. E. Marjoribanks] [27th August 1925]

satisfactorily dealt with in the Select Committee. As regards other questions such as rates of pay, no doubt, the House will have again an opportunity of dealing with them and the Government on their part will be glad to hear more opinions before they finally decide."

The motion that the Village Officers Restoration Bill be read in Council was put and carried.

The Secretary then read the title of the Bill.

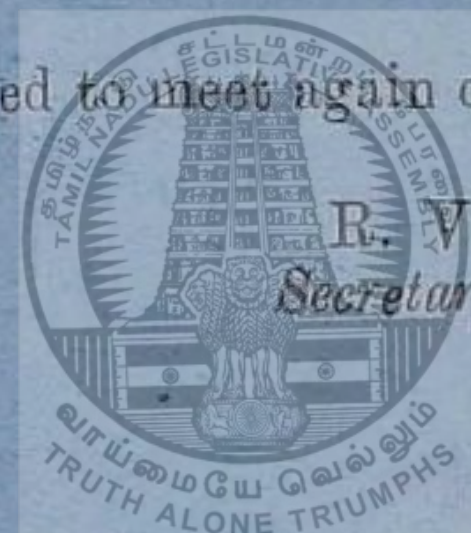
The hon. Mr. N. E. MARJORIBANKS:—"I move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee composed of the following Members:—

Rao Bahadur C. V. S. Narasimha Raju,	Mr. B. Ramachandra Reddi,
T. A. Ramalinga Chettiyar,	Diwan Bahadur P. C. Ethirajulu Nayudu,
Mr. A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar,	Mr. P. N. Marthandam Pillai,
S. R. Y. Ankineedu Prasad Bahadur,	" R. Veerian,
" V. Madhava Raja,	" E. W. Legh,
" R. Srinivasa Ayyangar,	The Advocate-General (Mr. T. R. Venkata-
" V. Hamid Sultan Marakkayar,	rama Sastriyar),
" P. T. Rajan,	Diwan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai, and
" B. Muniswami Nayudu,	The Mover (the hon. Mr. N. E. Marjori-
" K. Sarabha Reddi,	banks).

The hon. Sir C. P. RAMASWAMI AYYAR:—"I second it."

The motion was carried.

The Council then adjourned to meet again on 28th October 1925.



R. V. KRISHNA AYYAR,
Secretary to the Legislative Council.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT

PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ

Dated Fort St. George, the 3rd October 1925.

An Open Competitive Examination for the Indian Civil Service will be held in London in July-August 1926.

2. The age of the candidates on the 1st August 1926 must be less than 24 years but not less than 21 years.

3. Applications from intending candidates must reach the Secretary, Civil Service Commission, 6, Burlington Gardens, London, W. 1., on or before the 15th May 1926. Copies of the form of application and other particulars can be obtained from the Director of Public Instruction, Madras.

4. Detailed rules and regulations and a syllabus of the examination will be published in the *Fort St. George Gazette*.

A. Y. G. CAMPBELL,
Chief Secretary to Government.